

Basic Guidelines

Make reference to the person first, then the disability. For example: "A person with a disability" rather than a "disabled person".

The following are words that are affirmative and reflect a positive attitude. These are

WORDS WITH DIGNITY

Disability
Person who has multiple sclerosis
Paraplegic (person with limited or no use of lower limbs)
Quadriplegic (person with limited or no use of all four limbs)
Person who has cerebral palsy
Person who has a speech impairment
Person with a head injury
Person with AIDS
Person who has polio, has arthritis, etc.
Person with mental retardation
Person with a learning disability
Person with a mental disorder
Person with an emotional disorder
Person who is blind, partially blind
Person who is deaf
Person who is hard of hearing
Sign language interpreter
Born with "_____"
Caused by "_____"
Non-disabled (referring to a non-disabled persons as normal insinuates that disabled persons are not normal)
Person in a wheelchair
Person who walks with crutches, a walker, a cane, a limp, etc.

*Many blind persons and deaf persons consider the words "visually impaired" and "hearing impaired" to be offensive. Blind simply means without the sense or use of sight. Deaf simply means partially or totally unable to hear. They believe these two words describe their situation best. They do not wish to be identified as diminished in strength or value as the word "impaired" denotes.

**Crutches, walkers, and wheelchairs are mobility aids. Without the use of these mobility aids the person may be restricted from participation in their community.

The following words have strong negative connotations, please--

DO NOT USE

Handicap
Stricken with multiple sclerosis
Para
Quad
Spastic
Speech defect
The head injured
AIDS victim
Crippled with polio, arthritis, etc.
Retard
Dim witted, slow
Mentally ill
Crazy
Blind guys, visually impaired*
Deaf and dumb, deaf mute
Hearing impaired*
Deaf interpreter
Birth defect
Afflicted by
Normal
Confined/restricted to a wheelchair**
Crippled

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